



EUROPEAN DISCOVERY OF ULURU

18 JULY 1873



Uluru is one of Australia's most recognisable natural landmarks. While the Aborigines have known about Uluru for thousands of years, European explorers first discovered this magnificent landmark on 18 July, 1873.

Explorer William Gosse is believed to have been the first European explorer to see Uluru. He discovered the rock by accident during an expedition. He needed to find water for his camels so was forced to take a different course to the one he had originally planned. Upon his first sighting of Uluru, he declared it to be, *"...certainly the most wonderful natural feature I have ever seen"*.

With his cameleer, Khamran, Gosse climbed Uluru and viewed the surrounding country. He named the Musgrave Ranges to the south-east and called their highest point Mount Woodroffe, after the Surveyor General. He also noted a lot of evidence of Aboriginal occupation in the rock's caves.

The indigenous Australians knew the rock as Uluru, however following European discovery, the rock was named Ayers Rock after Sir Henry Ayers, Premier of South Australia at the time.

Scientifically speaking, Uluru is a large sandstone rock formation. It is made of a rich sandstone called *arkose* which is mainly grey and white. The distinctive rust colour is caused by a thin coating of iron oxide on the outer rock. Uluru is similar to an iceberg in that there is more of it under the ground than above it. The part we can see above the ground is 350 metres high and 9 km around.

One of the strange features of Uluru is the magical way in which it seems to change colour

and glow as light hits it from different angles. It takes on a stunning array of red and brown shades as the light changes.

There is almost no vegetation on the rock itself, however the area around Uluru is home to springs, waterholes, rock caves and ancient paintings.

In 1920 Kata Tjuta National Park, the home to Uluru, was declared an Aboriginal Reserve. Uluru is now listed as a World Heritage Site.

The first tourists arrived in the Uluru area in 1936. Beginning in the 1940s, there was permanent European settlement in the area due to the Aboriginal welfare policy and promoting tourism of Uluru. This increased tourism prompted the formation of the first vehicle tracks in 1948 and tour bus services began early the following decade.

In 1993, a dual naming policy was adopted that allowed official names that consist of both the traditional Aboriginal name and the English name. On 15 December 1993, it was renamed "Ayers Rock / Uluru". The order of the dual names was officially reversed to "Uluru / Ayers Rock" in 2002.

Uluru has great cultural significance for the Anangu people, the traditional inhabitants of the area. They lead walking tours to inform visitors about the local flora and fauna, bush foods and the Aboriginal dreamtime stories of the area.

Because Uluru is a sacred site, the Anangu request that visitors show respect by not climbing it. However, it is not prohibited to climb Uluru. Some people believe it is unlucky and disrespectful to take away rocks from Uluru as souvenirs.



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Discussion Questions

Factual

1. Who was the first European to discover Uluru?
2. What was he looking for when he came across Uluru?
3. In what way is Uluru like an iceberg?
4. What was the European name given to Uluru?
5. What do the Anangu people request visitors **not** do when at Uluru?

Challenge

6. Name 3 other significant landmarks in Australia.
7. Name one significant landmark, (natural or man-made) in each of the following countries; New Zealand, England, France, China, India.